

**Religion in American History**

**840:319**

**Fall 2011**

**T F | 12:35-1:55**

**Tuesday / TH-205**

**Friday / BIO-205**

Dr. Joseph Williams

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**Course Description:** This course surveys America's religious history and will focus on the complex relationship between religion and American culture. The following questions guide the organization of the course: How have the religious ideas and rituals of religious Americans changed over time, especially in relation to trends in politics, science, technology, gender relations, the economy, and immigration (to name a few)? What themes connect the religious beliefs and practices of various groups throughout U.S. history? How have various religious traditions interacted in an American context? How does the contemporary practice of religion in America compare to past expressions of religion in the U.S.? In answering these questions students will be introduced to the diversity of American religion and its relationship to other aspects of American culture.

**Course Objectives:**

This course seeks to encourage critical thinking about the nature of religion in the United States. After taking this course, students should:

- gain a broad outline of the major figures and events in the history of religion in the United States.
- be able to identify distinctive patterns and themes in the history of American religion.
- become familiar with the diversity of American religious life.
- understand key ways in which the religious past continues to shape the present religious climate in the U.S.
- be introduced to some basic theoretical approaches to religion
- produce an original research paper based on both primary and secondary sources exploring the impact of historical trends discussed in class on a particular religious tradition in the United States

**Course Texts (other readings are available on the internet or through Sakai):**

Title: American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon, by Stephen Prothero

ISBN-10: 0374529566 ISBN-13: 978-0374529567

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Title: Religion and American Culture: A Reader (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), edited by David Hackett

ISBN-10: 041594273X ISBN-13: 978-0415942737

Publisher: Routledge

Title: Religion in America (8<sup>th</sup> edition), by John Corrigan, Winthrop S. Hudson

ISBN-10: 013615817X ISBN-13: 978-0136158172

Publisher: Pearson

## Course Requirements:

In Class Exams: There will be two in class exams (a mid-term and final exam). Make-up exams will only be permitted if arrangements are made with the instructor *prior to* the day of the test.

Visitation Response: Early on in the semester you will need to attend a religious service (please select a group that you are not very familiar with). You will then write a 5 page response (at least 1250 words) that 1) describes your experience and 2) explores connections between what you observed and specific themes in American religion that we have discussed in class. I will provide more specific guidelines in class, including specific questions for you to answer in your response.

Essay: You will be required to write one main 7-8 page (1750-2000 words) essay this semester based on research utilizing both primary and secondary sources. In your essay you will explore a specific topic related to a religion of your choice. Further guidelines will be handed out and discussed in class.

Requirements for the Essay and Visitation Response: Papers turned in after class has started on the due date will be considered late and lose 5%. Papers turned in after class is over will lose 15%. **No papers will be accepted if they are turned in more than one class period after the due date** unless arrangements have been made with the instructor *prior to the due date*. **In addition to the hard copy of your paper turned in during class, you should also submit your paper to Turnitin.com via Sakai on the due date of the paper. You will lose 10% off your paper if you do not submit it electronically via Sakai on the due date. \*\*Please note, your paper is not officially turned in until I have a hard copy of the paper.** Email submissions *will not* be accepted.

\*\*Plagiarism and cheating will be handled in accordance with university policy. See <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml#plagiarism>

Quizzes: There will be unannounced quizzes throughout the semester based on the course readings. **Readings should be read by the date they are listed on the syllabus.** Anyone who has read the assigned pages should have no problem answering the questions. One quiz score may be dropped and will not count towards the final grade (this includes a missed quiz). Make-up quizzes will only be allowed for excused absences approved by me beforehand (for funerals, heart bypass surgeries, et cetera). **\*\*It is your responsibility to make sure you have read the material by the due date.** Problems downloading the online readings will not excuse you from taking a quiz.

Attendance: Attendance is expected at all classes. A record of attendance will be kept throughout the semester. More than 4 missed classes will negatively impact your participation grade (you will lose 10% off your participation grade for each absence above the first four).

## Grading System:

2 Exams: 40% (20% each)  
1 Essay: 25%

Quizzes: 10%  
Participation: 10%

Visitation Response: 15%

100-92 A, 91-87 B+, 86-80 B, 79-77 C+, 76-70 C, 69-60 D, 59-below F.

**Course Schedule** (Fine Print: I may make changes to the course readings, schedule, and policies as the course progresses. It is your responsibility, even if you miss classes, to keep yourself up-to-date on the course requirements.)

## 9/2 Introduction

**9/6 How is Religion Studied? Conflicting Narratives of American Religion.** Please read Prothero, Introduction.

**9/9 Gold, Honor, and Souls: Native Americans and Spanish/French Missions.** Please read Hackett, Ch. 3 and Corrigan, Ch. 1.

**9/13 Puritanism in the Colonies.** Please read Hackett, Ch. 2.

**9/16 Diversity and Revivalism in the Colonies.** Please read Corrigan, Ch. 2, and “The Future Punishment of the Wicked Unavoidable and Intolerable,” by Jonathan Edwards (posted on Sakai)

**9/20 Enlightenment, Revolution, and Religion.** Please read Prothero, Ch. 1.

**9/23 Create Your Own Religion Assignment**

**9/27 The Female Majority.** Please read Prothero, Ch. 2, and Corrigan Ch. 7 (only 151-54).

**9/30 Create Your Own Religion Presentations**

**10/4 New Visions in a New Republic.** Please read Corrigan, Ch. 8 and Prothero, Ch. 5.

**10/7 The Native American Religious “Underground.”** Please read Hackett, Ch. 7, and the Code of Handsome Lake (posted on Sakai)

**10/11 Catch-up day.** No reading due.

**10/14 Exam #1**

**10/18 Slavery, the Civil War and Religion.** Please read Hackett, Ch. 4 & Ch. 9.

**10/21 No class—in lieu of class, please visit a house of religious worship for your visitation assignment.**

**10/25 Religion & Science in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.** Please read Corrigan, Ch.11 and Hackett, Ch. 20.

**10/28 Visitation Response Due.**

**11/1 Judaism in America.** Please read Hackett, Ch. 12.

**11/4 Judaism in America.** Please read Prothero, Ch. 7.

**11/8 Catholicism in America.** Please read Corrigan, Ch. 10 and the following example of anti-Catholic discourse: *Disclosures of Maria Monk* <http://www.reformation.org/maria-monk.html> (just read chapters 6 and 11)

**11/11 Catholicism in America.** Please read Corrigan, Ch. 15.

**11/15 Black Religions in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.** Please read Hackett, Ch. 19 & Prothero, Ch. 6.

**11/18 Religion in Contemporary Politics.** Please read selection on “Religion & Politics in the U.S.,” available on Sakai.

**11/22 No Class. Thursday class schedule.**

**11/25 No Class. Thanksgiving Holiday.**

**11/29 Islam in the U.S.** Please read Corrigan Ch. 16 (only 360-69), and selection on “Islam in the U.S.,” available on Sakai. **Essay due.**

**12/2 Hinduism in the U.S.** Please read Hackett Ch. 25, and Prothero, Ch. 8.

**12/6 Buddhism in the U.S.** Please read Corrigan Ch. 16 (only 369-77), and selection on “Buddhism in the U.S.,” available on Sakai.

**12/9** No reading due.

**12/13 Summary and Conclusion of the Course**

**Final Exam Time: Thursday, 12/22 8:00-11:00**